

A photograph of a mother and daughter, Mary Beth and Becca Kaplan, smiling and embracing in a shallow pool of water at a tropical waterfall. The water is clear and greenish-blue, and the background shows a lush, green forest with a waterfall cascading down. The title 'TROPICAL transformation' is overlaid in a large, white, serif font with decorative swirls.

TROPICAL transformation

Mother-daughter pair **Mary Beth** and **Becca Kaplan** reveal how a nutrition program and Costa Rican retreat helped them reclaim their health and their lives

BY MARY BETH KAPLAN | PHOTOGRAPHY BY CATHY STRONG FOR GR8PHOTO.COM





SEVERAL YEARS AGO,

I lost my entire colon—and almost lost my life. After six weeks at the famous Mayo Clinic, I was left with an extremely compromised digestive system (to put it mildly). It changed the way I ate, digested, and viewed food. I was no longer able to eat what I loved. Sugar caused problems, and I couldn't eat anything raw. I had no appetite, let alone cravings. Eating became a tedious chore. My weight at times went down to as low as 85 pounds, and for a time I needed a walker to get around.

I had to be vigilant about keeping my weight up, but getting even basic nutrition was a challenge, and painful distention, bloating, gas, cramping, and pain became the norm. My doctors had done all they could.

My 17-year-old daughter, Becca, suffered with her own health concerns. She had food addiction issues and was “hooked” on sugar. She was prone to hostile outbursts at home, and her brothers had only half-jokingly suggested she be institutionalized. We were all walking on eggshells. She'd say things like, “You're breathing too loud!”

After I read a book called *The Truth About Beauty* by Kat James, in which she describes her own 12-year struggle with an eating disorder and how she used nutrition and supplements to overcome it, I wondered if her approach might help Becca. I eventually learned about Kat's week-long “Total Transformation” programs around the country, and—at the peak of one of Becca's more difficult periods—decided to get us both to Kat's program, to help *her*, never imagining I would transform my health as well.

THE WEEK THAT CHANGED EVERYTHING

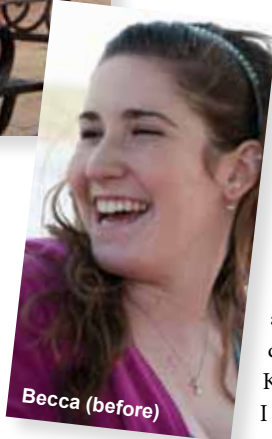
I had no intention of eating the food served at Kat's program, figuring it would cause me problems. She insisted I get my doctor's approval to try her diet anyway, and the first night of the program I couldn't resist the “Low Impact” Turkey Fennel dish from her book. It was high in fat and even had dairy and some vegetables I had not been able to eat. To my shock (and per Kat's prediction), my extremely touchy digestive system responded flawlessly.

Kat explained that the absence of sugar (and anything that turned into it) was likely decreasing my reactivity. I continued eating what she served as the days went on. I did not make my usual shakes and was not served grains all week. Amazingly, my usual bloat began to diminish, my gas literally went away, and my energy began to increase. Not only was I surviving without my beloved food staples, I was thriving without them. And I found myself actually savoring and enjoying the mouth-watering food, including amazing desserts, which I'd given up long ago. The changing state of my digestion was miraculous to me.

In the meantime, Becca was having her own revelations. The first couple days coming off of the sugar, she ducked into our room a few times to nap or let some emotional flair ups pass, but she knew by the third morning that “something was happening.”



Mary Beth (before)



Becca (before)



(from left): Mary Beth and Becca enjoy a trail ride to a waterfall for a photo shoot with Kat's other attendees. Mary Beth, who once relied on a walker to get around, zip lines over the rainforest canopy! A staff member at Leaves and Lizards Arenal Volcano Cabin Retreat in La Fortuna, Costa Rica, packs Mary Beth's twisted ankle with freshly picked anti-inflammatory herbs. Becca milks a goat at Leaves and Lizards.

Becca: *"I couldn't imagine that anything could ever calm the 'beast' of my food addiction. The beast that used to wake me up at 6 a.m. 'needing' to stuff myself with sugary cereal. The one that compelled me through three fast food drive-through places in one night, or to use all my babysitting money to buy candy. Sometimes I'd be so drugged after my binges I'd get blurry vision; I almost got in a wreck once. My abdomen would look like I was six months pregnant. I obsessed over calories and skipped meals only to binge again, no matter how hard I tried not to. And as soon as there was a little room in my stomach, my mind would obsess over what I could eat again."*

The foods we were eating at Kat's seemed so "fattening" that I wondered how I could eat so many calories and get through the program without gaining weight. But by the third day, I realized I had no more cravings and began feeling calmer than I'd been in a long time. I never craved once at her program because I was never given the chance to feel deprived. Unbelievably, willpower was suddenly a non-issue. Kat definitely proved to me that you can eat all you want as long as food does not spike your blood sugar, and is nutrient-dense and full of good fat."

BACK HOME

It was the morning after we arrived home that my sons, after spending the morning with us, said, "She's not insane anymore!"

Not only were Becca's emotions in check, but her body started shrinking, too. Kat called it inflammation loss. After five months, over 35 pounds had been shed. Becca was down from size 10 to a 4, but she never stepped on a scale or focused on being a certain size. She was more concerned about her mood and her relationship with food.

As for me, it was beyond words how much more alive I began to feel. I'd actually regained my appetite and could eat so many foods I couldn't touch before, like cooked onions and garlic, which used to destroy me. I now knew it was the rice or grain I used to eat them with that caused the problems for me. Soon, I didn't have to worry about keeping my weight up like before. I still had times where my digestive tract acted up and I'd have inflammation and struggle for a few days, but it seemed to be triggered by stress, not diet. Thankfully, those times are now the exception, not the rule.

My energy is on an entirely different level than when I started. My good HDL cholesterol went up 12 points, and my LDL and cholesterol and triglycerides all went down 10-12 points, even though I was eating more cholesterol than I had ever eaten.

What is really priceless for me, though, is being able to sit down with friends and family and partake in the celebration of eating along with everyone else. After living as I had, I realize what a gift that is and don't take it for granted!

Becca: *"Before Kat's program, I couldn't even sleep at night and would not be able to function during the day from lack of sleep and my bingeing 'hangovers.' That dramatically changed after the program. An added benefit was that my allergies, itchy eyes, sneezing, and wheezing during exercise stopped."*

I did hit a bump in the road after a while. After about six months of feeling really good, I began to forget about my progress and take for granted the miracles that had happened. I began to resent not being able to eat 'regular food' like pizza and other junk with my friends, so I started indulging again. The taste of the junk wasn't as great as I remembered, but I felt that obsession starting to return."

When I found out about the opportunity to go to Costa Rica to do another program with Kat, it motivated me to get back on track."

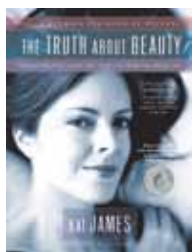


A view of Arenal volcano from Leaves and Lizards Arenal Volcano Cabin Retreat, the Costa Rican home of Kat James' life-changing Total Transformation program. To learn more about Leaves and Lizards, go to www.leavesandlizards.com.



**WIN A
TROPICAL
TRANSFORMATION
with
KAT JAMES!**

Want to be transformed like Mary Beth and Becca? One *Amazing Wellness* reader will join Kat James for her Total Transformation Costa Rica program in 2011 or 2012 at incredible Leaves and Lizards near Arenal Volcano. Go to www.amazingwellnessmag.com for details on how to enter.



To learn more about Kat James bestselling book or Total Transformation program, visit www.InformedBeauty.com or call 877-54-TOTAL.

FAST-FORWARD TO MARCH 2011: COSTA RICA

We had stayed in touch with Kat by doing her brush-up teleseminars over the phone. She was so excited by our transformations that she invited us to attend her program at Leaves and Lizards Arenal Volcano Cabin Retreat in Costa Rica. We were in for a true adventure in paradise!

In the year since we'd attended the first program, I had never "fallen off the wagon" and it took no willpower to stay the course—just smart planning, shopping, and cooking. Living without all the pain and distention I used to have made it easy for me to stick with it. Becca stayed the course for the most part, but fell off temporarily. I think the stumble actually galvanized her commitment to staying on the regimen.

Once in Costa Rica, we were both enchanted by the experience of "living off the land" while enjoying the luxury of the exotic accommodations and pampering (the volcanic mud facial was awesome!) We gathered our eggs from a chicken coop, picked noni and green papaya right from the trees, and made cheese from a goat we'd just milked! Desserts included homemade passion fruit ice cream* and a delicious flourless cake. Fresh green papaya, garlic, lime, and ginger became a Thai appetizer that made us all feel great!

When we returned home to Arizona, my doctor was thrilled to hear that I'd been swimming near a thundering waterfall, zip lining, hiking to the base of a volcano, and soaking in a hot river fed by the volcano! I did twist my ankle, and the locals packed it with fresh anti-inflammatory herbs we picked right there. The experience was "pura vida" as they say in Costa Rica—pure life!

Becca: "Girls my age are partying and eating junk. I see my friends try to get off sugar, but they rarely succeed because they are too afraid of fat and don't take supplements. Kat taught us how important eating ample fat is when you get off sugar. She is also a huge fan of supplements, as they helped her get her life back after her eating disorder. I am so grateful to have found a way of living and eating that truly works."

* For recipe, go to www.amazingwellnessmag.com.

OUR SUPPLEMENT REGIMENS

SUPPLEMENTS WE BOTH TAKE:

- **NORDIC NATURALS** Ultimate Omega
- **DR. OHHIRA'S** Probiotics
- **NATURAL VITALITY** Natural Calm
- **NEW CHAPTER** Neurozyme
- Turmeric
- Chromium for blood sugar support
- High-potency vitamin D3

MARY BETH'S SUPPLEMENTS

- Betaine HCL
- **ENZYMEDICA** Digest Gold
- **LIFE EXTENSION** Mitochondrial Energy Optimizer
- SOD
- **NEW CHAPTER ORGANICS** 40+ Every Woman II
- **NEW CHAPTER** Zyflamend
- Sea buckthorn
- Vitamin C
- **ALOE LIFE** Aloe Gold Juice Concentrate
- Trace minerals

BECCA'S SUPPLEMENTS

- **NATURE'S WAY** DIM Plus Estrogen Metabolism Formula
- **BARLEAN'S** Brevail
- **SOLARAY** Adrenal Caps
- **SOLARAY** BioZinc
- **METAL-FREE** (to reduce heavy metal accumulation)
- Holy basil (to address anxiety)
- Methionine, inositol, and phosphatidyl choline for brain health
- GABA for sleep
- 5-HTP for sleep and mood
- L-tyrosine
- Free-form amino acids to calm mood and food obsession